

Prevention Research Matters: Fitness for People with Mental Illness Who are Overweight

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Latoya Simmons] Welcome to Prevention Research Matters. I'm your host, Latoya Simmons. People with serious mental illness die 15 to 30 years before the rest of the population, and about 80 percent of this population are overweight or obese.

Dr. Stephen Bartels is a researcher with CDC's Prevention Research Center at Dartmouth College. Dartmouth is one of 26 academic research centers across the country who study how people and their communities can help reverse the risks for chronic diseases. He's joining me today by phone to discuss a program called InSHAPE that is helping people with mental illness improve those numbers. Welcome, Dr. Bartels.

[Dr. Bartels] Delighted to be here.

[Latoya Simmons] Dr. Bartels, why is Dartmouth's research on this topic important, and tell us about how the InSHAPE program works?

[Dr. Bartels] People with serious mental illness represent a population with one of the biggest health disparities in the United States and, tragically, very few people know about it. InSHAPE pairs individuals who have a serious mental illness with a personal health mentor who's trained in fitness, nutrition, and working with people who have mental illness. They're also trained in strategies for motivation. The pair meets weekly at a local gym to discuss lifestyle changes, including nutrition, fitness, weight loss, and how to shop for healthy food on a reduced budget.

[Latoya Simmons] What kind of mental illness did people in your studies have?

[Dr. Bartels] The participants in our research include those diagnosed with schizophrenia, mood disorders, major depression, or bipolar disorder.

[Latoya Simmons] How did the studies define participants who are overweight versus being obese?

[Dr. Bartels] Our studies include those who are overweight with a Body Mass Index, or BMI, of more than 25 and include those who are severely obese with a BMI of over 40.

[Latoya Simmons] What kind of results are you seeing?

[Dr. Bartels] Well, we've conducted two randomized trials of InSHAPE and both showed that half of InSHAPE participants reduced their risk for cardiovascular disease. Those in the overweight group with BMI of 25 to 39 benefited similarly to those with severe obesity with a

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BMI of 40 or greater, and more than a third of the people in our InSHAPE program who were severely obese lost five percent of their body weight, and there was an increase in fitness as measured by the distance that a person can walk in six minutes.

[Latoya Simmons] Is there a next step for your research and the InSHAPE program?

[Dr. Bartels] Yes, and we're really very excited about it. InSHAPE was first tested in two studies—one in rural New Hampshire and the other in urban Boston. Those studies both showed a reduced risk for heart disease with either weight loss or an increase in fitness in half of participants. Since we were able to show success with the program, Dartmouth is now conducting a national study of InSHAPE with 48 mental health organizations across the country. This research study will determine the best approach to successfully implementing effective health promotion programs like InSHAPE in routine mental health organizations. We're also starting a different study for a group-based program called PeerFIT, which is designed for young adults with serious mental illness who are overweight or obese.

[Latoya Simmons] Where can listeners get more information about the InSHAPE program?

[Dr. Bartels] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/prevention-strategies/InShape. Dartmouth also has resources at our website which is hprcd.org/obesity.

[Latoya Simmons] Thank you, Dr. Bartels. I've been talking today with Dr. Stephen Bartels from the Dartmouth College Prevention Research Center about an effective program called InSHAPE that helps people with serious mental illness be physically fit and lose weight.

Preventing and controlling chronic disease is why Prevention Research Matters.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit CDC.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.